

The Voter Empowerment Act

On March 19, 2015, more than 170 House Democrats joined Congressman John Lewis (D-GA), Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD), Assistant Leader Jim Clyburn (D-SC), Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) and Congressman Robert Brady (D-PA) in reintroducing the **Voter Empowerment Act of 2015**.

Twenty states have erected new barriers to the ballot box since 2010. Sponsors offer the VEA as a continuation of the ongoing effort to ensure that every American has an equal and fair opportunity to make their voices heard through the electoral process. Protecting the right to vote requires continued vigilance and review. January 23, 2016, marked the 52nd anniversary of the 24th Amendment. This amendment ended the discriminatory barrier of a poll tax in federal elections. These and other discriminatory practices were often used to prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote. Two years later, the Supreme Court officially extended the prohibition on poll taxes to state elections.

The VEA: Protecting the right to vote in the 21st Century

Unfortunately, the realities of Election Day 2012 reminded all Americans that although much progress has been made in ensuring equal access to exercise the right to vote, much work remains. Across the country, Americans waited in line for hours as they attempted to vote. Many were forced to cast provisional ballots, while others were victims of false information scams, or subjected to draconian early voting rules.

This is an unacceptable standard for a leading global democracy. We can and should do better. Election observers and civil rights organizations identified major 2012 Election Day logistical problems. The VEA responds to these challenges with specific, common-sense solutions.

How does the VEA respond to the call to action?

The Voter Empowerment Act addresses the major delays and obstacles that voters – regardless of political party or region – experienced during the 2012 election.

GOAL	THE VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACT (VEA) SOLUTION
Ensuring Access to the Ballot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modernizes the voter registration system• Ensures access to online voter registration• Ensures military and overseas Americans' ballots are counted• Allows same-day registration• Notifies voters when voting changes are made• Encourages youth to become voters• Assists voters with disabilities• Restores rehabilitated citizens' right to vote
Preserving Integrity in Voting Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restores trust in elections officials• Provides informed and reliable poll workers• Counts all provisional ballots• Prohibits voter caging• Protects voters from deceptive practices and intimidation
Demanding Accountability in Election Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a national voter hotline• Ensures votes are counted correctly• Reauthorizes the Election Assistance Commission